



STATE SENATOR **Wayne Kuipers**

30TH SENATE DISTRICT E-MAIL UPDATE



Free MiWiFi

The State of Michigan and SBC Communications, announced the MiWiFi, powered by *SBC FreedomLink* Wi-Fi service, will be available at no charge to all Michigan travelers until April 30. MiWiFi service is available at New Buffalo Welcome Center, Coldwater Welcome Center, Grand Haven State Park, Clarkston Rest Area, Holland State Park, Mackinac Island State Dock and Ludington State Park. Business travelers will be able to easily check in with their home office, truckers can use laptops to communicate with dispatchers, and teens on family vacations can instant message and email with friends at home. MiWiFi enables travelers with laptop computers or personal digital assistants to connect to the Internet at speeds 50 to 100 times as fast as a dial up connection. Customers can gain access when they are within approximately 150 feet of a MiWiFi hotspot.

Legislation Introduced to Aid Children Through the Judicial Process

Children would get help navigating Michigan's circuit court system under legislation introduced Wednesday in the Michigan Senate. Senate Bill 379 would create the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Act to allow a circuit court to establish a court-appointed special advocate program. Under current law, courts may already appoint CASA volunteers. Senate Bill 379 would establish this practice into law and provide set criteria and guidelines for those volunteers. A prospective CASA volunteer would have to be at least 21 years of age and have a demonstrated interest in children and their welfare. They also must receive instruction in recognizing child abuse and neglect, cultural awareness, child development and court procedures.

Senate Approves Bill to Encourage Students to Pursue Careers in Agriculture

Residents could get relief from some of their student loans if they go into fields like agricultural processing or large animal veterinary medicine under legislation approved by the Michigan Senate. Senate Bill 228 authorizes the state to repay up to \$750 a year for 10 years of a student's education loans if the student works in agricultural processing or large animal veterinary medicine during that time. The agricultural processing industry is experiencing a shortage of skilled workers. During a 2004 food-processing summit, participants indicated that they were having a difficult time finding workers with skills in welding, hydraulics and woodworking. The bill is part of a package of legislation that aims to help Michigan's rural economy. SB 228 now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

Senate Approves Bill to Provide Funding Options for Recycling

Legislation to give local municipalities more options for funding recycling programs won unanimous approval from the state Senate. Senate Bill 79 would allow local units of government to sponsor a ballot proposal to fund recycling programs. Local voters then would have an opportunity to vote on the additional funding.